



Architect Drafts Design for Downtown Digs

As an architect, Anthony Catsimatides spends his days translating residential and commercial client design concepts into reality. As a small business owner, Anthony has been his own toughest customer during the renovation of Open Atelier's new location in downtown Syracuse. The 6,000 square-foot Warren Street building represents more than just room to grow for Anthony's architecture firm, Anthony explains, "I'm a big advocate of revitalizing downtown Syracuse, and part of my desire to buy this building is to stake hold and become part of the community."

With the financial partnership of SBA, M&T Bank and the Greater Syracuse Business Development Corporation through the 504 loan program, Open Atelier acquired the building last fall and will transition from the Cazenovia location this month. To achieve an open, light-filled work space, Anthony is overseeing deconstruction of the cubicle-creating partition walls, fixed windows and dropped ceilings inherited from the building's previous owner. The result will feature new windows and skylights on opposing sides of the building that can be opened for natural light and cross ventilation, skylights for natural lighting as well as an open floor plan with-emphasizing original architectural features such as pilasters and terrazzo flooring ~~columns~~ as focal architectural elements.

2009 was a busy year for Open Atelier- in addition to designing the new office space, Anthony's company-firm worked with private homeowners, small businesses and completed ~~multimillion-dollar~~ designs for larger institutions such as Cazenovia College and multimillion dollar facilities for furniture retailer Raymour & Flanigan, headquartered in Liverpool, NY. For Anthony, working on projects is a collaborative creative process: "I tend to be very loose with my employees in a democratic process to allow them come up with anything a broad range of ideas. No idea is too crazy, because ultimately we can feel it back in and make refine it to make it practical. That's how we come up with very innovative and creative approaches to anything everything we design, whether it's a small addition to a house, ~~or~~ a multi-family housing project or a commercial building design."

Open Atelier's architectural design philosophy ~~on design development~~ is a guiding influence on each project, incorporating taking into consideration more than just the building's purpose, physical measurements and ~~client's financial~~ a multitude of constraints that is inherent in almost all projects. "We're not designing just a building-when you go through the right process and the right approach, a successful building emerges, influenced by the surroundings, technology, aesthetics and the environment around it. ~~The process is ultimately more important than the finished product~~ The finished product is ultimately a better design when it is informed by the process," Anthony adds.